

In the Most Fashionable Style Making a Home in the Federal City

COVER:

MORGAN AND SANDERS SHOP THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, 1809 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Acknowledgments

When President John Quincy Adams arrived in Quincy shortly after his father's death in July of 1826, he found "Everything about the house is the same," but upon entering his father's room, he was reminded "as if it had been an arrow to the heart" of his loss. "My father and mother have departed. The charm which has always made this house an abode of enchantment is dissolved. . . ." Adams' words are a reminder that people, rather than things, were at the center of early American households.

The efforts of many individuals are reflected in "In the Most Fashionable Style," the fourth of the Octagon Museum's exhibitions on life in early Federal Washington. Special thanks are due to our many generous lenders for their participation in this project; in particular, Susan Borchardt, John Burrows, Giles Cromwell, Tambra Johnson, Tammis Kane Groft, Lee Langston-Harrison, Lynne Dakin Hastings, Barbara Magid, Jane Webb Smith, Neville Thompson, and Jim Zeender. Bill Butler, John Fralin, Derrick Parker, Bob Norton at the National Museum of American History, and Ron Ashmore of Willow Street Woodworks made vital contributions to the installation. Marty Anderson Design is responsible for both the invitations and the exhibition checklist.

The magnificent drawing room window, floor, and wall re-creations must be credited to the creativity of the following:

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Special appreciation is due to Julie Ross who conducted extensive and valuable newspaper research for the project and Wendy Taylor who spent considerable time and effort researching the Tayloe family. Joanna Tobin and David Showers of the American Architectural Foundation graciously agreed to play Elizabeth and William Wirt in the exhibition audio tape.

In London, Diane Berger acted as research associate for the project, and the Octagon will be reaping the results of her work for several years to come. We are very appreciative of the detailed research that Diane performed in libraries, archives, and museum collections on behalf of the museum.

As always, the Octagon History Series benefits from the numerous contributions of Ellen Kirven Donald who also is the author of the accompanying publication. Whenever called on, Ellen generously donated her time and expertise to "In the Most Fashionable Style." She made important contributions to the selection of objects and the installation of the exhibition.

Kym S. Rice Guest Curator

Introduction

The idea of the home as a statement of personal identity took root first among middle-class urban Americans.

Ideals of family life were changing in the early nineteenth century. Marriages for love became customary, and as a result, families grew more child-centered. Increasingly work and home were differentiated as separate spheres: private and public life became distinct. Gender distinctions expanded, and women's roles consequently were confined more completely to the home. Leisure activities in which all family members participated became an important dimension of middle-class domestic life.

Physical changes in the home environment reflected these societal changes. Houses became more spacious and comfortable. Better marketing, improved transportation, and increased discretionary income opened a new world of goods to more consumers than ever before. Living standards grew more elaborate: ideas of fashion and taste were no longer restricted to just the wealthy and the powerful. Individuals' choices of color, style, decorative appointments, and furnishings for their homes reflected their personal aspirations.

1

THE ISAAC STERLING FAMILY OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

ARTIST UNKNOWN
OIL ON CANVAS, ca. 1820–1830
THE CHRYSLER MUSEUM; GIFT OF EDGAR
WILLIAM AND BERNICE CHRYSLER GARBISCH

As images of ordinary nineteenthcentury American families suggest, the home increasingly was set apart as a private world.

2

A DOMESTIC SCENE

ARTIST UNKNOWN
PEN AND WASH, 1823
SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW
ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON,
MASS.; GIFT OF NINA FLETCHER LITTLE

Virginian Anna Campbell recorded the prevailing sentiment in her diary, "What a happy part of our nature is the love for the home! the disposition to find there in that one spot, all to make us happy as we can be in this world!"

3

VASES (PAIR)

MATERIAL UNIDENTIFIED, SILVER GILT, ca. 1820–1840

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

The consumer revolution of the eighteenth century made a greater variety of specialized goods available at cheaper prices. These vases, perhaps mantel ornaments, were found in a well associated with the Moses Handless family, free black residents of Alexandria.

4

FARMER GILES & HIS WIFE SHEWING OFF THEIR DAUGHTER BETTY....

JAMES GILLRAY (1756–1815) COLORED ETCHING, LONDON, 1809 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

This English print spoofs the pretentions of a farmer and his family. The window treatments, carpets, girandoles, mantel ornaments, and other elements in their parlor signal the family's genteel aspirations.

5

CABANE DE L'EURYDICE

ANNE-MARGUERITE HYDE DE NEUVILLE (ca. 1749–1849)

WATERCOLOR AND PENCIL ON PAPER, 1816

THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW YORK CITY

Diplomats, Louisa Catherine Adams observed in 1804, lived in greater luxury than other Washington residents. Bound for the city in 1816, the Baroness Hyde de Neuville, the wife of the French ambassador, sketched her family's sumptuous cabin on the *Eurydice*.

NATHAN HAWLEY AND FAMILY

WILLIAM WILKIE
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER,
NOVEMBER 3, 1801
ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ART,
ALBANY, NEW YORK

This scene was painted by a prisoner in Nathan Hawley's Albany, New York, jail. The jailor, his wife, and their eight children are gathered together in the sparsely furnished parlor. Although the Hawleys' windows are bare, the room included, as a modest concession to comfort, an inexpensive canvas rug called a floor cloth and several painted chairs. Three framed landscape prints are hung on the wall in period fashion (and two more paintings are glimpsed through the open door).

THE SCHUYLER FAMILY

1824–1859) WATERCOLOR, 1824 THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW

AMBROSE ANDREWS (WORKING,

THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW YORK CITY; GIFT OF ELIZABETH HARRISON

The presence of musical instruments was an indication of a family's cultural aspirations. Prominent in this portrait of a New York household is the handsome pianoforte with an adjustable piano stool.

"Alexandria, which is seven miles from the city, may be considered the seaport. Georgetown is the residence of shopkeepers, and Washington the depot for office-holders, placehunters, and boarding-house keepers, none of whom would appear to be in possession of too much of this world's goods."

So English traveler Henry Bradshaw Fearon described the Federal City during an 1818 visit. He went on with contempt, "The few private families to which I have had introductions, do not evince a more accurate knowledge of that English word *comfort*... indeed, I would class them a century inferior to Boston and half a century behind New York."

Fearon found Washington in the first stages of its eventual urban transformation. By 1820 the population had reached 33,039 residents—and increased further during the winter months when Congress was in session. Despite economic fluctuations, the city's commercial development was steady. A survey of some 400 probate inventories between 1807 and 1826 indicates that Washingtonians were, contrary to Henry Fearson's observations, interested in comfort and willing to invest in fashion.

Washington

8

WASHINGTON LOOKING WEST

MONTGOMERY MEIGS (1816–1892) WATERCOLOR, JUNE 28, 1850 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A British visitor observed in 1807, "the Inhabitants of Geo-town which adjoins Washington instead of going to the *Country* Come to the *City* to take the fresh air." This mid-century watercolor provides a glimpse of the city's wide, unpaved streets and rural appearance. The diary of the artist, engineer Montgomery Meigs, indicates that he was in Washington on the date he drew this unidentified view.

Marketing and the Distribution of Goods

By 1798, "business was beginning to be pretty brisk in Washington," one resident recalled. Within fifteen years, Washington was firmly established as a commercial center. Shopkeepers in Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington City competed eagerly for their share of the local and regional marketplace. The "Elegant and great variety" of merchandise—as documented in the pages of the city's paper *The National Intelligencer*—on display in the city's shops was imported up the Potomac by ship from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and abroad. "British goods abound," a visitor commented in 1818, "as in every other part of America."

9 JEWEL CASKET

WOOD WITH PAINTED AND STENCILED DECORATIONS, ca. 1810 INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, PHILADELPHIA

Typical of goods imported from England or France, this japanned jewel box was sold in the Philadelphia "fancy shop" of Joseph Anthony & Son between 1811 and 1814. The classical decorations on the cover were then very fashionable.

10 SALES AT AUCTION

BROADSIDE, RICHMOND, 1807 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In 1806 Washington auctioneer
Nicholas Queen advertised the sale
of both new and used furnishings
including "elegant Mahogany bedsteads, chairs, tables, sophas, elegant Brussels carpeting, the greater
part of which is new, curtains, beds,
mattrasses, and bed furniture, all
finished in the newest fashion. . . . "
Broadsides such as this Richmond
example were common forms of
advertisements for sales.

11 CHAIR

BEECH, PAINT, EUROPE, ca. 1800
THE OCTAGON MUSEUM, THE AMERICAN
ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION

Possibly Scandinavian, French or Italian, this unusual high-style chair possibly entered the Washington market through the sale of a diplomatic household. According to family tradition, it was a gift to the Tayloes from Henry Clay, Senator from Kentucky.

THE AUCTION IN PUBLIC STREETS

NICOLINO CALYO (1799–1884)
WATERCOLOR, CA. 1840–1848
THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
NEW YORK CITY; BRYAN FUND

With such a large transient population, Washington developed an important secondary market for used goods. William Cabell Rives attended a household auction in 1823 and reported to his wife, "There were a good many very fine things . . . such as a plateau, gilt branch candlesticks (or candelabras, I think they call 'them) . . . & diverse other articles of the same sort, all of which were sold at high prices, I thought. . . . "

13 HARDWARE CATALOGUE

THOMAS POTTS (WORKING, 1829–1833) STAMPED BRASS, ENGRAVING, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, CA. 1830 MUSEUM OF ART, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN; GIFT OF SAMUEL H. TINGLEY

From coffin fittings to tea urns, retailers procured part of their merchandise through trade catalogues published by manufacturers. Well-illustrated with large engraved plates of available goods, entries usually included information about materials and prices. A few included actual samples.

14 CATALOGUE OF BUTTONS, BOLTS, CURTAIN BOWS

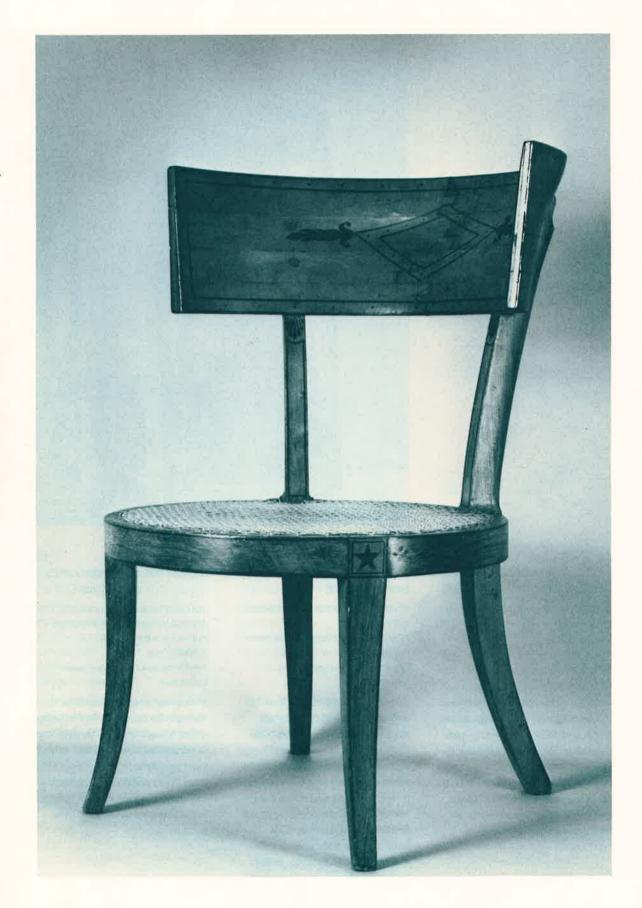
A.W. GILLET ENGRAVING, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, 1821

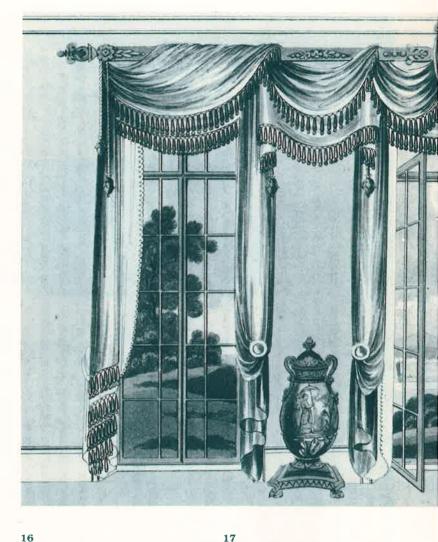
THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; RARE BOOKS COLLECTION

Trade catalogues also were instrumental in the dissemination of English style to American consumers.

BEECH CHAIR

THE OCTAGON MUSEUM, THE AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION





15 PATTERN OR SAMPLE BOOK OF DESIGNS FOR PRINTED COTTON

ATTRIBUTED TO ARCHIBALD H. ROWAN COLORED INKS, WILMINGTON, ca. 1795–1796
HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR

MUSEUM

Even though low-priced imported

Even though low-priced imported English printed cottons dominated the American market, attempts were made to establish native textile manufactories. This rare sample book was used for prospective customers. It is attributed to Irish immigrant Archibald Rowan who established a short-lived calico printworks on the Brandywine River in Delaware.

16 THE SHOP AND WAREHOUSE OF DUNCAN PHYFE

ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN RUBENS SMITH (1775–1849)
PENCIL, INK, AND WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, ca. 1815
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART;
ROGERS FUND, 1922

Between 1791 and 1840, at least 110 master cabinet and chair makers were employed in the Federal City. More than one-fifth of them remained in business for ten or more years. Craftsmen usually worked in their homes, and sold pieces from workshops and stores located on the first floor of their houses. This unique view is of the shop of well-known New York furniture maker Duncan Phyfe in Lower Manhattan.

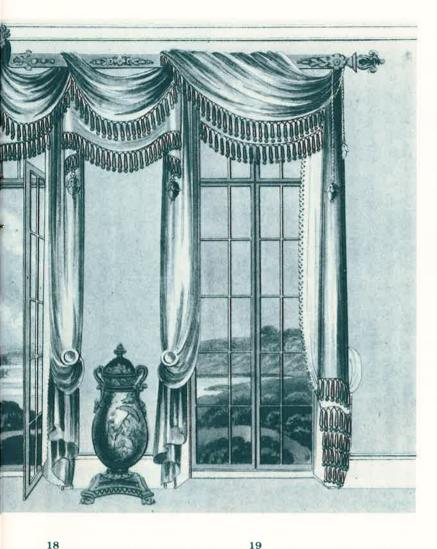
DESIGN FOR A COMMODE, PIER GLASS, AND TABOURETS

COLORED ENGRAVING IN RUDOLPH ACKERMANN, A SERIES CONTAINING FORTY-FOUR ENGRAVINGS LONDON, 1826 THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; RARE BOOKS

THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; RARE BOOKS COLLECTION

Widely-read magazines such as

Widely-read magazines such as Rudolph Ackermann's *The Repository of Arts* brought fashionable style to the public and to an extent, dictated popular taste. Copied from many sources, Ackermann's furniture designs were published both in the magazine and as a separate publication.



SECOND ROOM CONTAINING GREEK VASES

THOMAS HOPE ENGRAVING IN HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE AND INTERIOR **DECORATION** LONDON, 1807 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Hope's design book popularized among designers and architects a new "correct" neo-classicism which strictly interpreted the forms and patterns of classical antiquity as uncovered by archaeologists at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

19 SMITH'S CABINET-MAKER'S AND UPHOLSTERER'S GUIDE

GEORGE SMITH LONDON, 1826 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

CURTAIN DESIGN, MARCH 1820, THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

20 MEUBLES ET OBJETS DE GÔUT

PIERRE DE LA MÉSANGÈRE PARIS, ca. 1815 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

English and French design books had a tremendous impact on the American market with regard to furnishings and household decoration and were responsible for the transmittal of style. Thus far, the 1828 edition of Smith's is the only documented design book sold in early Washington.

The President's House

"You can go to Mrs. Monroe's drawing room . . . ," William Wirt wrote his daughter in 1818, "and see all the President's princely furniture, which is more splendid than had ever entered into my imagination to conceive. . . ." No home in the Federal City had a more profound influence on the public's taste than the President's residence. Beginning in Thomas Jefferson's administration, the mansion's public rooms were open on select occasions to tourists, residents, and official Washington. Congress yearly allocated funds to furnish and maintain the house. Visitors were particularly dazzled by the fashionable French tastes of the Madisons and the Monroes.

21 INVENTORY OF THE WHITE HOUSE (PARTIAL)

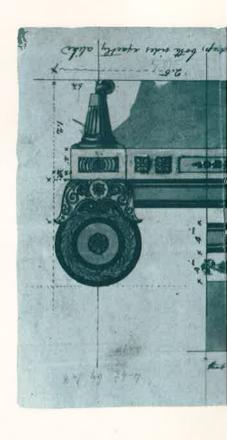
THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826) MANUSCRIPT, FEBRUARY 1809 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Before leaving the President's House in 1809, Thomas Jefferson made a complete inventory of the White House's twenty-three rooms. Nearly every important room in the mansion included mahogany furniture, carpets, window treatments, elegant lighting fixtures, and other adornments. The sitting room (inventoried here) and the unfinished drawing room were subsequently redecorated by Dolley Madison and the architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe.

22 SIDE CHAIR

BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE (1764–1820)
(DESIGNER), THOMAS WETHERILL
(WORKING, 1803–1824) (MAKER)
GESSOED, PAINTED AND GILDED
YELLOW POPLAR, OAK, MAPLE AND
WHITE PINE, CA. 1808
PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART; GIFT OF MRS.
ALEX SIMPSON, JR. AND A. CARSON SIMPSON
(BY EXCHANGE) AND FUNDS CONTRIBUTED BY
VARIOUS DONORS

One of a large set of chairs designed by Latrobe for the drawing room of Philadelphia merchant William Waln, this side chair displays the architect's knowledge of the fashionable neoclassical style as published by Thomas Hope. The chairs' decoration was based on the French Recueil de Décorations intérieures. Originally the caned seats were cushioned.

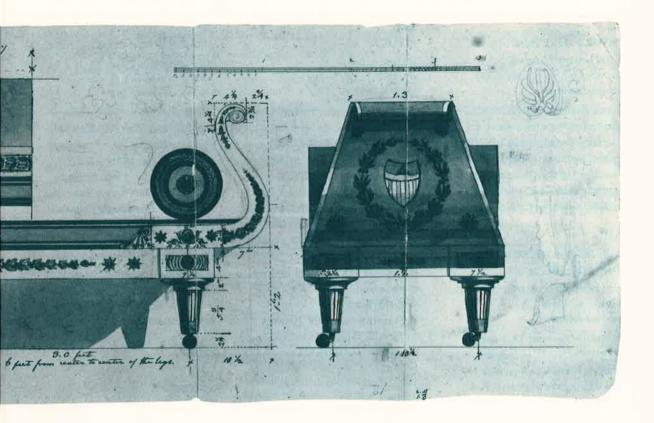


23 DESIGN FOR A SOFA...

BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE (1764–1820)
WATERCOLOR, PENCIL, PEN AND INK
ON PAPER, 1809
THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY;
THE MRS. GAMBLE LATROBE COLLECTION

Latrobe and Dolley Madison completed the oval White House drawing room in a classical theme using intense reds, blues and yellows. The architect designed handsome furnishings for the room including this elegant painted and gilded sofa decorated with the shield of the United States.



24 DESIGN FOR A CHAIR...

BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE (1764–1820) WATERCOLOR, PENCIL, PEN AND INK ON PAPER, AUGUST 28, 1809 THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY; THE MRS. GAMBLE LATROBE COLLECTION

Deviating slightly from his furniture for the Walns, Latrobe added stretchers in an attempt to strengthen the curved *Klismos* chair legs. Even so, at least three of the chairs were broken in 1810 and had to be repaired.

DESIGN FOR A SOFA
BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE
THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY;
THE MRS. GAMBLE LATROBE COLLECTION

INVOICE FOR FURNITURE

JOHN AND HUGH FINLAY
MANUSCRIPT, SEPTEMBER 16, 1809
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Noted Baltimore fancy chair makers, the Finlays made thirty-six chairs, two sofas ("window seats"), and four settees for the new drawing room based on Latrobe's designs. Ornamental painter George Bridgport possibly decorated the furniture.

26

INVOICE FOR MELINDA [MALINDA FREEMAN]

BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE (1764–1820) MANUSCRIPT, 1809 NATIONAL ARCHIVES

In addition to sewing chair covers, tablecloths, sheets, and napkins, Malinda Freeman, a free black woman, received fifty cents per day for 14 days in July, 1809 for her work with another seamstress altering window curtains and carpets for the President's House.

27 INVOICE

LEWIS LABILLE
MANUSCRIPT, DECEMBER 29, 1813
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Formerly an "Upholster from Paris (Lately arrived from Philadelphia)," Lewis Labille established himself in Alexandria in 1795. In addition to providing repairs and reuphostering, Labille also cut and laid carpets for the President's House dining room, the sitting room, and the back stairs. He remade the sitting room curtains "cutting out the silk for the triming and Lining making the small draperies & pulling up the Curtains."

28

INVOICE

WILLIAM PALMER
MANUSCRIPT, DECEMBER 1815
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

With the exception of the drawing room's red curtains, all of the new furnishings for the President's House were destroyed when the British burned the mansion in 1814. Living first at the Octagon and then at the Seven Buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue, the Madisons made some purchases for their temporary quarters. Included were two grey and gold settees with eighteen matching chairs bought from the New York shop of William Palmer, Mrs. Madison reimbursed the Treasury for the chairs and took them with her when her husband left office.

29 INVOICE

ANDREW COYLE MANUSCRIPT, 1815 NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Wallpaper for the Seven Buildings was purchased from Coyle who advertised in 1813 that he "Constantly keeps a large stock of the newest patterns."

30 INVOICE

LEWIS LABILLE MANUSCRIPT, APRIL 1815 NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Labille's charges included the removal of the old wallpaper and the installation of new in the hall and the drawing room of the Seven Buildings.

31

ARM CHAIR (ONE OF A SET OF FOUR)

MAHOGANY, FRANCE, ca. 1815
JAMES MONROE MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL
LIBRARY, FREDERICKSBURG

The James Monroes moved back into the rebuilt White House in 1817. Their French taste proved controversial. Shortly after taking office, the couple sold some of their furniture acquired in France during diplomatic service to the President's House and placed an order in Paris for more. Protests over these foreign purchases helped force a careful review of Monroe's Furnishing Fund expenditures. This French carved chair is one of a set probably used in the President's House.

32 BILL

C. ALEXANDRE
MANUSCRIPT, ca. 1818
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

French emigre Charles Alexandre's bill detailed his upholstery of three pieces of sitting room furniture for the Monroe White House. The chief expense was his labor.

33 BILL

GARDINER & VERON
ENGRAVING COMPLETED IN
MANUSCRIPT, PHILADELPHIA,
APRIL 20, 1825
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Astral lamps and other new lighting purchased in Philadelphia were among the John Quincy Adams' acquisitions for the residence. A visitor to the President's House during the Adams' tenure noted that "the three front rooms were brilliantly lighted."

Following his appointment as the United States Attorney General in November, 1817, William Wirt planned his family's move to Washington from Richmond in close consultation with his wife of fifteen years, Elizabeth. Excerpts from the couple's correspondence at the Library of Congress and the Maryland Historical Society, written between 1817 and 1818, are dramatized here. The letters illustrate this upper middle-class family's concerns with creating a suitable and stylish home in early Washington.

Greating a Home in the Federal City: Elizabeth and William Wirt

34 ELIZABETH GAMBLE WIRT

CEPHAS THOMPSON (1775–1856)
OIL ON CANVAS, CA. 1809–1810
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN
INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

35 WILLIAM WIRT (1772–1834)

CEPHAS THOMPSON (1775–1856)
OIL ON CANVAS, ca. 1809–1810
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN
INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

"As you imagine Bess is cleaning up the rooms—it being after breakfast—the folding doors are open & the centre table with an astral lamp upon it, Stand in the door way, our venetian blinds are half drawn up, there is a fire in our new stove . . . our tufted (Bess says) rug lies upon our new carpet, our mahogany chairs with hair cloth seats are in the front parlor, our cane seat cherry wood chairs are in the back parlor our large side board stands on one side—the back parlour our small side board between the windows of the same room, one of our pair of tables is in the front passage the other in the back parlor—our Leviathan sofa stands between the window & under our gilt framed mirror in the front parlor—the passage lamp hangs at the foot of the stairs-our passage being carpeted with straw matting one strip of venetian carpeting over it—our stair carpet & elegant flat rods are not yet put down—I forgot our front parlor mantel, where stands a very handsome pair of candleabra—viz. gilt candlesticks with a centre two side branches, hung about with glass prisms—the only extravigance our house contains."

Benjamin B. French to Mary French, Washington, November 4, 1838

In "the Newest and Neatest Manner:" Furniture

Incorporating classical elements, Federal furniture was lighter and more delicate in feeling than eighteenth-century examples—although mahogany remained the predominant wood. New specialized furniture forms emerged related to dining, entertaining, and leisure time activities such as sideboards, cellarettes, work tables, pianofortes, sofas, and washstands.

36

LIST OF ARTICLES TO BE PURCHASED IN LONDON

BENJAMIN OGLE TAYLOE (1796–1868) MANUSCRIPT, 1817 MRS. BARCLAY K. READ

John Tayloe III apparently purchased a portion of his furniture, ceramics, glass, silver, and personal items in England. This list of goods to be "sent to America" by his son included "Piano Forte [for] J.T."

37 INVOICE

THOMAS WEBB
MANUSCRIPT, 1802
TAYLOE FAMILY PAPERS, VIRGINIA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, RICHMOND

Cabinetmaker Thomas Webb's detailed bill testifies to the wide range of services he contributed to the Octagon household. Webb provided a substantial amount of furniture for both the public and private spaces in the house. He also refurbished, repaired, and reinstalled numerous other pieces owned or procured by the Tayloes. Also included in his bill are charges for the installation of cloak pins, window curtains, and cornices in both the drawing and the dining rooms.

38

MESSRS MORGAN & SANDERS

COLORED ENGRAVING IN
ACKERMANN'S THE REPOSITORY OF
ARTS, LONDON, 1809
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

"What toil and trouble it takes to build and furnish a house ...," Rosalie Stiers Calvert—living near Washington in 1807—complained to her father. "We have imported several pieces of furniture from London ... and we just received a Greek [style] lamp to hang in the middle of the salon, which is beautiful." The London cabinetmakers, Morgan and Sanders, stocked ready-made furniture.

39

ACCOUNT BOOK ENTRY, JUNE 29, 1808 (REPRODUCTION)

THOMAS BEALL
MANUSCRIPT, 1802–1811
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Beall purchased a set of 3 dining tables, a large mahogany bedstead with cornice, a mahogany secretary, and a pair of toilet (dressing) tables from cabinet-maker William King Jr. King worked in Georgetown from approximately 1801–1820 and examples of his work purchased by the Monroe administration are still part of the White House collection.

40

CABINET HANDLE PLATES, GREEN AND GREEN CABINET SHOP

STAMPED BRASS, 1800–1850 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

41

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS, GREEN AND GREEN CABINET SHOP

WOOD, DISCARDED ca. 1827 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Shortly after English cabinet-maker William Green opened his Alexandria shop in 1817, he advertised that his wares were "equal, if not superior, to any in the District." After his death in 1824 his son James expanded the business and opened a second store on Pennsylvania Avenue. Artifacts (discarded after a fire in 1827) excavated from their Alexandria shop include furniture hardware, a spool for upholstery thread, and a screw-turned spindle from a clothes press.

42

CABINET PLATE AND KNOB, ANN BUCKLAND SITE

STAMPED BRASS, ca. 1800–1810 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY



43 CABINET PLATE, SAMUEL LINDSAY SITE

STAMPED BRASS, ca. 1840 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

44 KNOB, McKNIGHT'S TAVERN

BRASS, ca.1790–1810 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Historians of consumerism regard furniture as a "bridge." Individuals buy these goods to take possession of a small part of the life to which they aspire.

45 PANELLED DOORS

BOOK OF PRICES OF THE COLUMBIA CABINET-MAKERS' SOCIETY . . . FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF CABINET-WARE MANUSCRIPT, 1831 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Price books were used to establish standards for production and compensation. Threatened by the appearance of cheaper factory-made furniture, Washington's first cabinet-makers' price book was created by a group who sought "to regulate the prices of Journeywork . . . allowing them better remuneration for their labor." Although advertised, the book was apparently never published.

CONSOLE TABLE

MAKER UNKNOWN;

SIGNED "W. PRINGLE/PAINTER"

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM;

H. RANDOLPH LEVER FUND

CONSOLE TABLE (ONE OF A PAIR)

MAKER UNKNOWN:

SIGNED "W. PRINGLE/PAINTER"
POPLAR WITH MAHOGANY GRAINING
AND GILT DECORATION, WASHINGTON?,
ca. 1815–1825

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM;

H. RANDOLPH LEVER FUND

To date, few pieces of early Washington furniture are identified. The extensive gilt decoration on this classically-inspired table is attributed to William Pringle, a fancy chair painter apprenticed to Georgetown craftsman John White in 1821. An ad for White's shop in 1824 mentioned that he made "all kinds of the most fashionable and elegant chairs and sophas." To imitate expensive mahogany furniture, pieces were *grained* or painted in imitation of the wood.

47 SAMPLE BOOK OF FANCY-CHAIR DECORATION

PAINTED LAQUERED CARDBOARD, TOOLED AND GILDED LEATHER BINDING, ENGLAND, ca. 1800 REDWOOD LIBRARY AND ATHENAEUM, NEWPORT RHODE ISLAND

48

W. BUTTRE'S FANCY CHAIR MANUFACTORY, NEW YORK CITY

ENGRAVING, ca. 1810
THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; DOWNS
COLLECTION

"Fancy chairs" with painted or japanned decorations became popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and continued to be fashionable through the first three decades. Chair makers decorated the furniture with a variety of freehand and stenciled designs.

49

SIDE CHAIR (ONE OF A SET)

PAINTED WOOD, BALTIMORE, ca. 1805–1815

BOARD OF REGENTS, GUNSTON HALL

This painted chair is part of a set which originally belonged to George Mason VI (d. 1834), the grandson of Gunston Hall's builder, George Mason. Baltimore was a leading center of fancy chair manufacture.

50 ARMCHAIR

PAINTED WOOD, BALTIMORE, ca. 1810 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

One of a group of Baltimore-made painted furniture, this chair is decorated with botanical illustrations.

The set originally was commissioned for Colonel John Eager Howard's Baltimore home, "Belvidere."

Charles Carnan Ridgely purchased the "15 Yellow & Gilt cane bottom arm chairs with cushions, 2 sofas & 3 window seats to match" in the 1828 auction of Howard's estate.

51 SIDE CHAIR WITH 19TH-CENTURY HORSEHAIR SEAT

MAHOGANY, AMERICA?, ca. 1800 BOARD OF REGENTS, GUNSTON HALL

This chair originally belonged to Thompson Mason of Hollin Hall, a plantation south of Alexandria. Horsehair cloth was a favored textile for seating upholstery.

52 TAMEING A SHREW . . .

CHARLES WILLIAMS (WORKING, 1797–1830) COLORED ENGRAVING, LONDON, OCTOBER 1815 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Providing both privacy and warmth when drawn, bed curtains completely enclosed a bedstead to create, in the words of one observer, "a room in itself."

53

AN ENGLISH BED

COLORED ENGRAVING IN ACKERMANN'S THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, LONDON, 1816 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A page from a Tayloe account book dated October, 1805, noted the purchase of a bedstead through William Murdock, the family's London agent. The bed described as "Orange Coloured best marine [wool] furniture, part lined full Vallins fringed Tassals lines Hooks & Ca" may have resembled this Ackermann's illustration.

54

PEDESTAL (ONE OF A PAIR)

ROSEWOOD AND GILT BRASS,

BOSTON, 1818

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW

ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON, MASS.;

GIFT OF SUMNER APPLETON WELD

The pedestal's design appeared in a November, 1815 issue of Ackermann's *The Repository of Arts*. Described as a candelabrum, the pair were "suitable for the support of an argand lamp, or the globe for a gas-light." Originally they were displayed in the Boston drawing room of merchant Nathan Appleton's fashionable home.

55 THE CABINET-MAKERS' LONDON BOOK OF PRICES

PRINTED BOOK, LONDON, 1793 BOARD OF REGENTS, GUNSTON HALL

Philadelphia was the foremost center of American furniture manufacture in the early Federal period. Philadelphia editions of this price book issued in 1794 and 1796 were instrumental in the widespread introduction of new English furniture forms such as those illustrated in Thomas Sheraton's Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book (1793 and 1794).

"We are here in lodgings. The rooms are good and convenient enough, they have only one fault which if we dealt in Tongues and Hams would be a great virtue, for we could smoke them either in the parlor or bedchamber. We have closed our fireplaces with a broad pine board, but

without much effect. . . . "

Benjamin Henry Latrobe to George Davis, Washington, February 6, 1804

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century improvements in fireplace equipment and fuel created a cozier and more comfortable environment in many middle-class homes. Washingtonians burned either wood and coal in their households—or sometimes a combination of the two. Sir Charles Bagot told his successor in 1819, "Wood is the fuel generally used in Washington . . . but you will prefer burning coal in some of your rooms. . . ." On display in the Octagon's Drawing Room is the fireplace's original coal grate and iron surround decorated with gilded ornamentation.

56

FIREPLACE MODEL

CHARLES WILLSON PEALE (1741–1827)
AND RAPHAELLE PEALE (1774–1825)
WHITE PINE AND PAPER WITH BRASS
AND STEEL PARTS, 1796–1797
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Charles Willson Peale and his son Raphaelle were awarded \$60 by the American Philosophical Society for their proposed invention which safely increased the amount of heat given off by a common fireplace.

57BELLOWS, GADSBY'S TAVERN SITE

WOOD, LEATHER, ca. 1790–1810 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

58

HEARTH BRUSH, GADSBY'S TAVERN SITE

WOOD, ca. 1790–1810 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Fireplace accessories such as hearth brushes and bellows had both a functional and a decorative purpose.

59

PEDDLER'S SAMPLE BOOK

WATERCOLOR, FRANCE, 1800–1809 THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; DOWNS COLLECTION

In this time period, ordinary objects received lavish decorative treatments such as the two japanned fireplace bellows illustrated in this rare French traveling salesman's catalogue.

Heating

61

ANDIRONS

BRASS, BALTIMORE, ca. 1790–1810 HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

Fireplace equipment followed fashionable forms and motifs. This handsome neoclassical pair of andirons were made in Baltimore.

62

DESIGNS OF STOVES, RANGES . . .

M. AND G. SKIDMORE
COLORED ETCHING AND AQUATINT,
LONDON, 1811
REDWOOD LIBRARY AND ATHENAEUM,
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Coal was a cleaner, cheaper, and more effective fuel than wood. This "Grecian Pattern Elliptic Register Stove," equipped with a coal grate, appeared in the earliest known catalogue for coal-burning stoves intended for both the founders' trade and the buying public.

Lighting

"It was near 7 when we returned to the parlour, which was brillantly lighted, (as I think light a great promoter of social pleasure)."

Margaret Bayard Smith, February 4, 1835

Until the second half of the nineteenth century candlesticks proved the most reliable source of artifical light for many Americans. By 1800, however, technological improvements in lighting interiors augmented candlelight in the homes of those who could afford them.

63

THE DINNER PARTY

(REPRODUCTION)

HENRY SARGENT (1770–1845) OIL ON CANVAS, ca. 1821 MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

64

CANDLESTICK, MARKET SQUARE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

BRASS, 19TH CENTURY
ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

65

CANDLESTICK, KING STREET WELL

BRASS, 1790–1810 ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

While tallow candles could be manufactured at home, most Washingtonians purchased their candles ready-made.

66

CANDLESTICKS

SILVER FUSED ON COPPER, SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND, ca. 1815 MRS. BARCLAY K. READ

Georgetown merchant John Peabody advertised in 1818 that he had for sale "Sheffield Plated Ware" including forty pairs of plated candle sticks. Originally part of a larger set, these examples are engraved with the Tayloe crest and have a family history.

67

THREE CANDLE WALL SCONCES (PAIR)

WOOD, GESSO, GILDING, AMERICA OR ENGLAND, ca. 1800 ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ART; BEQUEST OF KEITH S. MCHUGH

68

COMPANY SHOCKED AT A LADY GETTING UP TO RING THE BELL

JAMES GILLRAY (1756–1815) COLORED ENGRAVING, NOVEMBER 20, 1804 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

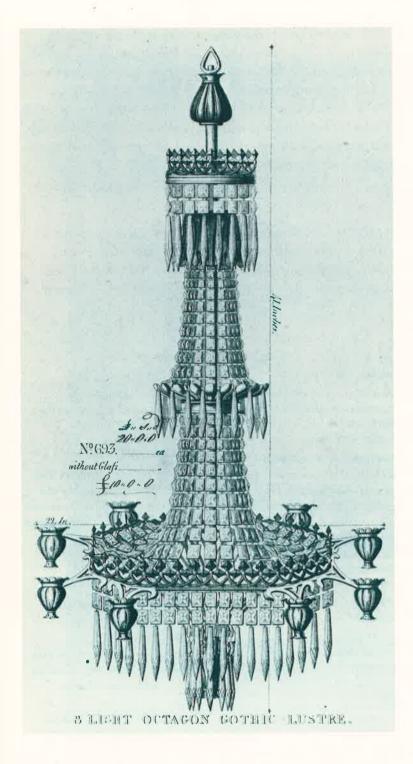
Light was a vital component in the success or failure of a social event. In this print, four *girandoles* or mirrors framed with elaborate sconces are used to illuminate the dining room.

60

CANDELABRA (ONE OF A PAIR)

CAST BRONZE, FRANCE, ca. 1820 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

A fashionable French form, candelabra accommodated multiple candles and provided more light than a single candlestick.



CATALOGUE OF LIGHTING DEVICES,
CA. 1830
THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY;
RARE BOOKS COLLECTION

70 ARGAND LAMP (WITH MODERN ELECTRIFICATION)

METAL, GLASS, BOSTON, ca. 1830–1833 HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

The development of an adjustable lamp which burned oil and gave off a clear bright light—named for the inventor Francois-Pierre Ami Argand—marked the beginning of great improvements in lighting household interiors.

71 LAMP (ONE OF A PAIR)

JOHNSTON BROOKS OR MESSENGER GLASS, METAL, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, ca. 1820–1825 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Lighting devices with cut-glass surfaces were specifically designed to magnify and reflect light. Such a lamp might have been strategically placed in front of a mirror to provide added illumination.

72 THREE HANGING LUSTRES

ENGRAVING [IN CATALOG OF LIGHTING DEVICES], ENGLAND, ca. 1830 THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; RARE BOOKS COLLECTION

Washington probate inventories confirm that costly chandeliers were used to light the public rooms in a few of Washington's finest residences. At least one room at the Octagon, for example, was lit by a chandelier.

Fabric Furnishings

"At the moment I am busy making curtains, slipcovers, etc. for the dining room. The curtains [are] of that blue striped English cloth you gave me, [trimmed] with a white fringe intermixed with small blue tassels; there is just enough material for the windows and the sofa. The cornices are white and gild, [and] I plan to paint the room yellow. The middle bedroom has curtains and bed[hangings] of white dimity with white fringe intermingled with green and red embellishment, which is quite elegant."

Rosalie Stiers Calvert, Riversdale, New Carrollton, Maryland, March 2, 1804

By 1800 fashion statements in fabric, in the form of window treatments, appeared in drawing rooms, parlors, and dining rooms. Approximately two-thirds of the Washington, D.C. estates inventoried between 1807 and 1826 include at least one pair of curtains.

73 WINDOW CURTAINS FOR THE BOUDOIR

COLORED ENGRAVING IN ACKERMANN'S THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, LONDON, APRIL 1809

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Ackermann illustrated elaborate curtains, called "French draperies" by one scholar, with complicated treatments such as applied borders cut from contrasting colored velvets and undercurtains of sheer muslin that required the skill of a professional upholsterer.

74 CURTAIN

COLORED ENGRAVING IN JAMES BARRON, MODERN AND ELEGANT DESIGNS OF CABINET AND UPHOLSTERY FURNITURE, LONDON, 1814

THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; RARE BOOKS COLLECTION

Window hangings were hung from cornices or suspended from decorated poles.

75FABRIC SAMPLES

PRINTED COTTONS, ENGRAVING IN ACKERMANN'S THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, LONDON, 1813 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Early issues of Ackermann's included fabric swatches for consumers' color guidance. The February 1813 issue displayed a piece of "olive grounded chintz-pattern furniture print" for which the magazine suggested a "pale green, blue or rose pink" lining.

76DRAWING ROOM WINDOW CURTAINS

COLORED ENGRAVING IN ACKERMANN'S THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, LONDON, 1818

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In general *The Repository* recommended the lavish use of expensive textiles although inexpensive substitutions sometimes were suggested to readers. These drawing room draperies, for example, were fabricated of "exquisitely fine woollen cloth, on which the border is painted by hand... The sub-curtain is of muslin, withdrawn by cords and tassels."

77 THE TEA PARTY

EDWARD W. CLAY (1799–1857)
COLORED ETCHING IN ROBERT WALN,
JR., THE HERMIT IN AMERICA
PHILADELPHIA, 1819
AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

The intricate layered window treatments illustrated in this view of a Philadelphia drawing room confirms that elite Americans closely followed European fashions.

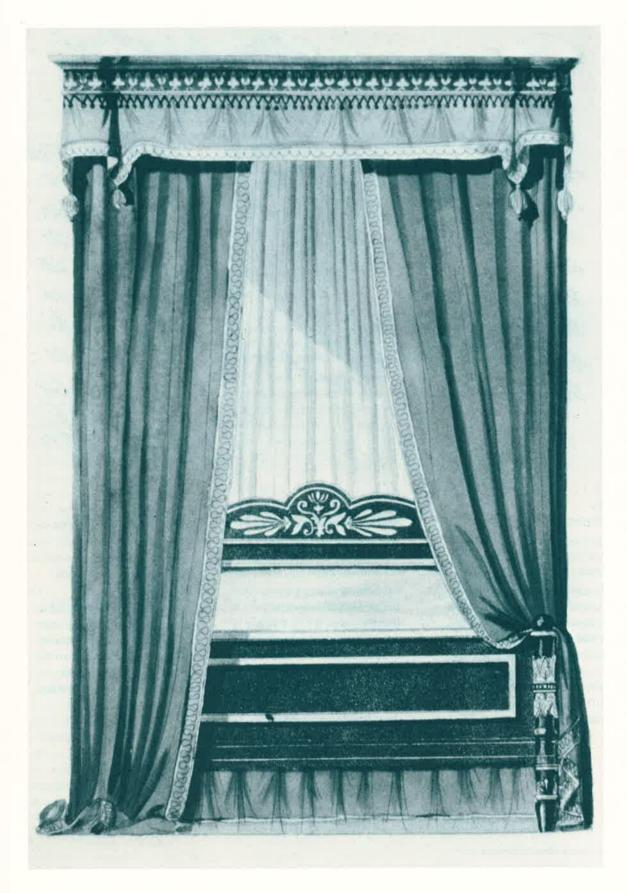
ORDER FOR DRAPERIES

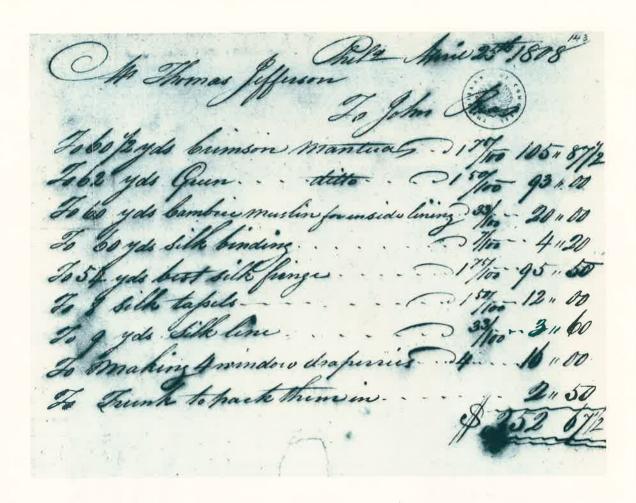
THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826) MANUSCRIPT, MARCH 2, 1808 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Enclosing a sketch of the new window valances he envisioned for his study at Monticello, Thomas
Jefferson requested that John Rea make them "of crimson damask silk, lined with green and a yellow fringe." Current fashion dictated the use of contrasting colored linings and trims to emphasize the drapery folds.

BED, 1815

THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS





79"THE STILE OF THE DRAPERY"

JOHN REA (WORKING, 1802–1851) MANUSCRIPT, APRIL 25, 1808 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Despite the apparent simplicity of Jefferson's curtains, they required professional execution. When Rea, Philadelphia's premier upholsterer, informed Jefferson that the order was complete, he included a sketch of the curtains which were gathered in three graceful swags and stylishly edged with fringe and tassels.

80 BILL FOR DRAPERIES

JOHN REA (WORKING, 1802–1851) MANUSCRIPT, APRIL 25, 1808 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Difficulties in obtaining the damask that Jefferson wanted—despite searches in New York and Baltimore—delayed the production of the curtains. Rea was able to substitute crimson and green *mantua*, a plain heavy silk generally used for clothing. The curtains apparently suited Jefferson as he ordered a matching crimson coverlet in the same material the following fall.

81

WINDOW HANGINGS (ONE OF FOUR SETS)

COTTON, ENGLAND, 1813
HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR
MUSEUM

Due to deterioration few original curtains survive. This chintz pair originally consisted of straight side panels gathered with rings on a curtain rod. The edges are bound with a narrow woven tape in contrasting colors.

82

TIEBACKS

BRASS, ENAMEL, IRON, ENGLAND, ca. 1800–1830
HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

Decorative hardware such as tiebacks held draperies in place.

83

LODGINGS TO LET

WILLIAM HOLLAND (PUBLISHER)
COLORED ENGRAVING, LONDON,
NOVEMBER 21, 1814
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

To allow for the maximum amount of natural daylight in a room, curtains were pulled back over tiebacks either with cords or as shown here.

84

STAG'S HEAD TIEBACK

METAL, ca. 1829
HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Patterned after the family crest, this stag's head curtain pin was one of a set used at Hampton, the Ridgely family country house outside of Baltimore. Larger tiebacks became necessary to contain the heavier and more extensive window treatments fashionable after 1820.

85

CORNICE

GILDED WOOD, ca. 1790–1830 HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

About 10% of the Washington households inventoried between 1807–1826 listed window cornices. Covered with fabric, gilded or painted wood, they concealed the drapery hardware as well as created an elegant capstone to a window ensemble. This example decorated with tobacco leaves was thought to have been used in the "Great Hall" at Hampton.

86

POLE END (FRAGMENT)

GILDED GESSO, ca. 1820
HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fashionable curtain poles also were ornamented with gilded decorations: the inventory of well-to-do Washingtonian John Law taken in 1822 included "4 gilt ornaments for Curtains." These leaves originally graced the pole ends in the dining room at Hampton.

87

CORD AND TASSEL HANGING (ONE OF A PAIR)

SILK, PAPER AND WOOD, EUROPE, ca. 1790–1840 HENRY FRANCIS DU PONT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM

The addition of ornamental trims increased the expense of window hangings. Applied silk cords and tassel ensembles were in a contrasting color to the drapery fabric.

88

COVERLET

LINEN GROUND WITH WHITE CREWEL WORK, PROBABLY THE SOUTH, ca. 1800 BOARD OF REGENTS, GUNSTON HALL

Needlework was one of the accomplishments cultivated by genteel American women at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The use of white hangings and coverlets was very fashionable throughout the first quarter of the century. This white on white bedcovering is representative of the fine sewing done by elite women for their households.

Wallpapers

In the early nineteenth century, wall papers increasingly were a popular and inexpensive decorating technique. Papers imported from France were the most fashionable.



CONNECTICUT EMPIRE SCENE
ARTIST UNKNOWN
NEW YORK STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
COOPERSTOWN

89

WALLPAPER BLOCK

WOOD AND METAL, FRENCH, 18TH CENTURY

SHELBURNE MUSEUM, SHELBURNE, VERMONT

90 WAREHOUSE OF J. BUMSTEAD & SON

B.F. NUTTING (?-1887) LITHOGRAPH, 1825–1836 AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

By 1815 several Washington merchants advertised paper hangings of all types. Among the French wallpapers sold by M. Poor in 1821 were "Blue papers sprinkled with gold, with velvet and festooned borders." The wallpaper shop illustrated here was in Boston.

91 BILL FOR PAPER HANGING

SAMUEL FITZHUGH
MANUSCRIPT, MAY 19, 1810
THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; DOWNS
COLLECTION

William Augustine Washington ordered wallpaper from Samuel Fitzhugh for his Georgetown residence in 1810. The next year Fitzhugh advertised "an extensive assortment of the most fashionable Paper Hangings With Velvet borders for cornices" available in his Washington shop.

92 GREEN WORM WALLPAPER

BLOCK-PRINTED ON LAID PAPER, ENGLAND, 1807

FLOCK BORDER

BLOCK-PRINTED ON WOVEN (?) PAPER, ENGLAND, 1807 SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

In 1807 James Rundlet, an affluent Portsmouth, New Hampshire, merchant, ordered wallpaper from England for his new house, then under construction. The order included eleven pieces of this "Green worm" paper with a flock border for the sitting room.

93 INVOICE TO LADY JEAN SKIPWITH

DAWES, STEPHENSON & COMPANY
MANUSCRIPT, AUGUST 3, 1799
SKIPWITH PAPERS, EARL GREGG SWEM
LIBRARY, THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

For her home, Prestwould in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, Lady Skipwith received from London a shipment similar to James Rundlet's which included 30 pieces of "worm & pin on sea green paper." The order also included narrow and broad festoon borders for use with the worm paper.

94 CONNECTICUT EMPIRE SCENE

ARTIST UNKNOWN
WATERCOLOR WITH CRYSTALLINE
DECORATION, ca. 1810
NEW YORK STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
COOPERSTOWN

This reinterpretation of an English print (Charity offering bread to a young begger) set in an American parlor depicts a glossy blue wall-paper decorated with silver baskets and bordered with leaves. *Isinglass*, or mica, created the sparkle here as it did on actual wallpapers.

95 RAINBOW WALLPAPER

ZUBER ET CIE BLOCK-PRINTED ON WOVEN PAPER, FRANCE, 1825–1835

ROSE BORDER

ZUBER ET CIE (ATTRIBUTED)
BLOCK-PRINTED ON LAID PAPER,
FRANCE, 1830–1835
SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON,
MASSACHUSETTS

Frequently glossed or varnished, this exuberant rainbow wallpaper gave "a shining or glistening appearance to the room."

96 RIBBON AND BOW BORDER

BLOCK-PRINTED ON LAID PAPER, UNITED STATES?, 1800–1810 SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Borders were an important element in wallpaper. Wider ones were often used at the ceiling or cornice level; narrow borders frequently outlined the features of a room including the door and window casings.

97 NORTH PARLOR OF DR. WHITRIDGE'S, TIVERTON, RHODE ISLAND, 1814

JOSEPH SHOEMAKER RUSSELL WATERCOLOR, ca. 1850 NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

As illustrated in this American parlor, wallpaper borders were intended to harmonize with—but not necessarily match—larger wall panels.

98 BORDERS

THOMAS HURLEY BLOCK-PRINTED ON PAPER, 1816 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Few American wallpapers exhibit this level of sophistication. The border was made by Thomas Hurley of Philadelphia and deposited for copyright along with a group of papers by Virchaux and Company. As early as 1786 Hurley advertised "Paperhangings put on in the neatest manner..."

Floor Goverings

Before 1800, carpets and other types of floor coverings were luxury items. Even wealthy households only had one or two examples, usually confined to the best bed chamber, drawing room, or dining room. Between 1807 and 1826, approximately 50% of the Washington households surveyed had some type of floor covering in at least one room.

99

THE DUTCH APOLLO!

WILLIAM HOLLAND (PUBLISHER)
COLORED ENGRAVING, JUNE 29, 1814
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Woven carpets for American floors were imported from England. Both "Wilton" and "Brussels"—a pile surface cut and uncut respectively— were available in a variety of elaborate motifs, including the busy geometric design seen here.

100

THE PRODIGAL SON RECEIVING HIS PATRIMONY

AFTER AMOS DOOLITTLE (1754–1832)
WATERCOLOR, AFTER 1814
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, SPRINGFIELD,
MASSACHUSETTS; HORACE B. WRIGHT
COLLECTION

In this scene from the Prodigal Son, the artist depicted a meandering vine wallpaper of the type produced in both New England and England at the end of the eighteenth century. The carpet is probably a Brussels. The watercolor illustrates the lively combination of wallpaper designs and patterned carpets in early nineteenth-century homes.

101

DIARY ENTRY, OCTOBER 20 AND 23, 1813

ANNA MARIA BRODEAU THORNTON (1775–1865) MANUSCRIPT, 1807–1813 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Some Washingtonians assembled their own carpeting. Anna Maria Thornton recorded on October 20, 1813, the purchase of 37 yards of carpet at \$1.90 per yard and several days later she paid sixty cents "To a woman to help make the Carpet" and for "Tacks and Thread."

102

FLOOR CLOTH FRAGMENT

PAINT, VARNISH ON HEMP, 19th CENTURY VALENTINE MUSEUM. RICHMOND

Painted canvas floor cloths were used in all types of American households—both as a carpet substitute or in heavily trafficked areas of a house as a protective covering for floors or carpets. Exported from England as well as made in America, floor cloths usually were decorated, frequently with geometric patterns. This rare piece was found in the Wickham-Valentine House (built 1812) attic and possibly used in the Richmond house.

103

A CUROSITY IN IRELAND

WILLIAM HOLLAND (PUBLISHER) COLORED ENGRAVING, 1814 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Listed in Washington inventories, small hearth rugs of the type illustrated here protected expensive carpeting.

104

CARPET DESIGN, NO. 341

I. ARBOTHNOT

WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID PAPER, 1803

WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS & COMPANY

Point papers are blueprints to guide carpet manufacturers in the production of designs. Loom directions are indicated at the bottom of the diagram. This group is for six carpet patterns woven on a horizontal Jacquard loom in 27 to 36 inch wide strips. The design shown here loosely interprets mosaic patterns.

105

CARPET DESIGN, NO. 474

I. ARBOTHNOT

WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID PAPER, 1813

WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY
LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS
& COMPANY

Benjamin Henry Latrobe ordered a Woodward and Company carpet (through Joshua Gilpin) for use in William Waln's Philadelphia residence which he designed. During his redecoration of the President's House in 1809, Latrobe recommended the same carpet, probably similar to this example, to Dolley Madison: "It would exactly suit in style and colors the Curtains of your drawing room. . . ."

106

CARPET DESIGN FOR BORDER, NO. 474

I. ARBOTHNOT
WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID
PAPER, 1813
WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY

WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY
LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS
& COMPANY

107

CARPET DESIGN, NO. 607

I. ARBOTHNOT
WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID
PAPER, 1815
WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY
LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS
& COMPANY

Over fifty designs in the Woodward Grosvenor and Company archives are signed by Arbothnot, including this exuberant floral example.

108

& COMPANY

CARPET DESIGN FOR STAIR RUNNER, NO. 644

WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID PAPER, 1830 WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS

109 CARPET DESIGN FOR BORDER, NO. 644

WATERCOLOR & PEN ON PRINTED GRID PAPER, 1830 WOODWARD GROSVENOR AND COMPANY LTD. ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS & COMPANY

Number 664 is an example of a late 1820s interpretation of a turkey, or turkish, carpet.

110

PLOCHERE COLOR SYSTEM

PAINTED CARDBOARD, 20TH CENTURY COURTESY J.R. BURROWS & COMPANY

These sixty-six cards closely match the colors presented in the dated and signed Arbothnot carpet designs, 1803–1817.

111

HUMMING-BIRDS OR A DANDY TRIO

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (1792–1878) COLORED ENGRAVING, LONDON, 1819 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Time pieces (and sometimes clocks), mantel ornaments, and framed prints and maps appeared with increasing frequency in Washington homes between 1807 and 1825. Thomas Turner's drawing room in 1816 included prints of the sea battle between the Constitution and the Guerrière, a portrait of President James Madison, and several other unidentified images.

112

BILL FOR FRAMING

S. THOMEE
MANUSCRIPT, NOVEMBER 7, 1803
THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY; DOWNS
COLLECTION

Thomee charged Georgetown resident William Augustine Washington for framing an oval print and regilding four others.

113

WALL BRACKET (ONE OF A PAIR)

WOOD, PAINT, GILT, ca. 1830
HAMPTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Brackets were among the decorative elements used in public rooms for display purposes. This pair was painted to match a set of chairs, a sofa, and two tables made for the Drawing Room at Hampton by John Finlay.

Other Decorative

Elements

Drawing Room: Interpreting Leriod Design

The Octagon, in this part of the exhibition, experiments with recreating the style and design in window hangings, wall, and floor coverings as they occurred in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Collaborating with Brunschwig & Fils, Scalamandré, and F. Schumacher & Co., using materials available in these companies' regular lines and drawing from a range of period sources, the Octagon presents three vignettes showing circa 1800, circa 1810, and circa 1820.

ca. 1800-F. SCHUMACHER & CO.

The earliest vignette displays a period in transition from eighteenth-century design. This section takes its inspiration from an 1804 letter by Rosalie Stiers Calvert from Riversdale, Maryland, in which she described a blue and yellow color scheme using blue English cloth curtains with white fringe and yellow walls.

WINDOW CURTAINS

These curtains are made of a wool moreen fabric which was widely used for window hangings in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their design shows a transition from earlier curtains which were drawn up in swags; instead, these are pulled aside over brass curtain pins. Elegant cornices often were used to accent the top of the window treatment. This cornice is based on a 1792 illustration by English designer Thomas Sheraton.

WALLPAPERS

Plain painted papers were extremely fashionable throughout the later part of the eighteenth century and continued to be stylish into 1800s. Popular colors included yellow, blue and green. These were often finished with ornamental wallpaper borders such as the architectural motifs used here.

CARPET

Patterned carpets woven in stripes and outlined with borders could be stitched together to create a wall-towall effect. Floral designs and bright colors were typical during this period. The carpet used here is adapted from a design of circa 1802.

ca. 1810—BRUNSCHWIG & FILS

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, classical design dominated American design motifs. Both French and English patternbooks and furnishing plates were widely distributed and commonly used as sources for many American interiors.

WINDOW CURTAINS (HARDWARE COURTESY OF HOULES TRIMMINGS)

This window treatment is based on French design. By this time the use of sheer undercurtains and striped or patterned silks and chintzes were the popular elements used in decorating windows. These were often displayed using fanciful brass curtain rods and ornamental hardware

WALLPAPERS

French wallpapers in a wide variety of designs dominated the market. These papers were generally sophisticated in both execution and pattern. Both the primary paper and festoon border are based on period documents in the Brunschwig & Fils archives.



CARPET (COURTESY OF J.R. BURROWS & CO.)

The carpet pattern is woven from a design in the archives of the English firm Woodward Grosvener and Company Ltd. and dates to circa 1800. This carpet shows the combination of floral motifs and geometric shapes that remained popular until 1825.

CA. 1820—SCALAMANDRÉ

Design trends in the 1820s followed the path that was begun in the previous decade but were more lavish in their interpretation. This decade too was a period of transition. By the end of the 1820s the scale and proportion of all types of the decorative arts were clearly moving toward what come to be known as the "Victorian Style".

WINDOW CURTAINS

This design is based on an illustration which appeared in the English magazine, Ackermann's *The Repository of Arts* in May 1820. It uses contrasting colored silks, decorative fringes, and sheer undercurtains to provide a richly layered appearance.

WALLPAPERS

The dado paper below the chair rail and the floral border are reproduced from wallpapers which survive at Prestwould, the Virginia plantation of the Skipwith family. These are French papers which were installed at Prestwould in 1830. The paper above the chair rail is reproduced from an English Regency design.

CARPET

The carpet is of an English design of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. English strip woven carpets dominated the market at this time. ROSE WALLPAPER BORDER, 1830-1835 COURTESY OF SPNEA, BOSTON List of Lenders

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The Octagon
The American Architectural Foundation
1799 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

The American Architectural Foundation (AAF) was founded in 1942 to advance excellence in architecture by stimulating the public's awareness and understanding of the world we build. Headquarters and symbol of the AAF, The Octagon is a designated Historic Landmark and the oldest museum in America dedicated to architecture.

The Octagon was designed by William Thornton, winner of the first competition for the US Capitol, and completed in 1801 as a city house for Colonel John Tayloe III, a Virginia plantation owner and friend of George Washington. It is one of the oldest houses remaining in the federal city.

The Octagon's role in American history advanced on the evening of August 24, 1814, when the British burned the city of Washington and the White House during the War of 1812. President and Mrs. Madison accepted Tayloe's offer to use the Octagon as a temporary presidential mansion, and the Treaty of Ghent was ratified in the upstairs parlor, thereby ending the war.

In 1970 the Octagon opened to the public as a museum devoted to architecture, the decorative arts, and early Washington history. Thousands of visitors each year tour its period rooms, view the changing exhibitions, and take part in the special programs commemorating its cultural and historical events. The Octagon is open from 10 am to 4 pm, Tuesday through Friday, and noon to 4 pm, Saturday and Sunday.

